Revisiting the Palani Inscription of Tribuvanachakravarthi Vira Pandya

The scope of this article is to revisit the Palani inscription of Tribuvanachakravarthi Vira Pandya and try to decode the identity of the king.

The inscription of interest is **A.R.No.611 of 1893**[1] and it is located at Shri Palaniandavar Temple(Hill top temple), Palani, Dindigul district, Tamil Nadu. This inscription is dated in the 22nd regnal year of Tribuvanachakravarthi Vira Pandya, a Pandya King. It speaks about donations to the Baladandayuthapani or Subramanyar temple of Palani located atop the hill by the person from Vaigavi nattu Ayikudi also known as Sundarapandyanallur.

The inscription does not provide any Saka era nor any astronomical details for calculating the period of the inscription. But, it provides intrinsic data in the form of the names of the temple officials involved in the transaction. Some of the temple officials who accepted the donation and signed it in the inscription is Gandaraditya Pallavarayan, Mudikonda Pallavarayan and Mudikonda Chola Bhattanan. Names clearly indicate they were given the titular names by the Chola king Gandaraditya Chola.

Contemporary Pandya king of Gandaraditya Chola is Cholan Talaikonda Vira Pandya. Generally agreed regnal years of Vira Pandya is 946 – 966 CE and last known regnal year for him is 20[2]. According to Kudunthai N.Sethuraman, regnal years of Vira Pandya is 940 – 960 CE and last known regnal year for him is 20[2]. We will stick to the dates provided by Shri Kudunthai N.Sethuraman[2]. By the year 946 CE, Cholan Talaikonda Vira Pandya has recovered the entire Pandya kingdom from the Cholas and his inscriptions start appearing around Madurai from his 7th regnal year onwards[2]. If we assume that **Gandaraditya Pallavarayan** is the official under Gandaraditya Chola, then, the Pandya king of the inscription is none other than **Cholan Talaikonda Vira Pandya**, the younger brother of Sundara Pandya and the son of Rajashima II[2]. There are no other inscriptions to prove that Gandaraditya Pallavarayan served under some other chola king. Contrary to popular understanding, last known regnal year of Vira Pandya becomes 22 and his year of death at the hands of Aditya Karikala becomes 962 CE. Based on the above, regnal years of Aditya Karikala should begin from 962 CE onwards.

References:

1)Rao Bahadur H.Krishna Sastri, South Indian Inscriptions, Volume V, Part 2, published by Archaeological Survey of India.

2) Kudunthai N.Sethuraman, “The Early Cholas”, published by Raman and Raman Private Limited.